

ITALIAN UFO REPORTER

Newsletter of the Italian Center for UFO Studies
C.I.S.U. - Corso Vittorio Emanuele 108 - 10121 Torino - Italia

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ITUFOR-7 is divided in two parts: in the first one you may read an update of the Italian UFO scene in 1987.

The second part is consisting of the English language abstracts of C.I.S.U. "UFO Information Review" ("UFO - RIVISTA DI INFORMAZIONE UFOLOGICA") No. 5, June 1988, that was a special issue on UFO abductions.

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THE ITALIAN UFO SCENE: 1987 UPDATE by Edoardo Russo

The year 1987 was a rich one for Italian ufology, mostly as of public education activities.

UFO INFORMATION WEEK

For the "40 years anniversary" of ufology, on June 24, the Italian Center for UFO Studies (Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici, CISU) organized a whole series of initiatives, called the "First National UFO Information Week". It was modeled on the MUFON example, and it was the first such attempt in Italy. All CISU members were asked to hold conferences, TV and radio programs, photo exhibitions, interviews in the local press at their own town, and several of them did so all over Italy.

At a central level, two press conferences announcing the UFO information Week were made in Milan and Turin; an International Congress was sponsored and a national opinion poll was conducted.

As a result, we got dozens of articles in the daily press for two months, several national and regional TV and radio broadcasts, interviews in the weeklies, etc. thus allowing us to be better known by witnesses as well as by people interested in ufology.

THE TURIN CONGRESS

The Congress and the opinion poll were aimed at stimulating attention from the scientific milieu, by presenting a "different" image of ufology. This was successful: the theme of the Congress was "Forty Years of UFOs: for a Scientific Approach to the Problem" and speakers presented a really scientific viewpoint, including a professor of psychology from the University of Turin, an informatician from the EEC Euratom laboratories, a Ph.D. from the National Institute of Nuclear Physics, a well-known science journalist, a French professor of Philosophy, an Austrian researcher from the Salzburg University. The who's who of Italian ufologists was also attending, of course, with

papers by Paolo Fiorino, Gian Paolo Grassino, Edoardo Russo, Paolo Toselli, Maurizio Verga, etc.

THE OPINION POLL

A few surprises came from the poll conducted on CISU behalf by Gallup associate "Doxa": Italians believing in UFOs dropped from one third to one fifth in the last ten years. For the first time in Italy, people were also asked if they ever saw a UFO: 6 percent answered yes, which means as many as three millions witnesses in our country! (CISU filed only ten thousands reports in forty years.) But we are proud that this was the first national poll on UFOs ever conducted on behalf of (and paid by) a UFO organization. [For a detailed summary of both the poll and the Congress, see "Italian UO Reporter" No. 5, December 1987]

STUDIES, RESEARCH AND ACTIVITIES

Public education is not the only activity of CISU, of course, and our organization has kept on working on the research projects already in progress: regional catalogues/files of UFO sightings, research in library newspaper collections, usual field investigations. Some new activities launched in 1987 include: a catalogue of Fortean events in Italy, the "CISU Video Service"; two new UFO Phone Hotlines (besides the Turin one); a "UFO-BBS" for telematic-equipped ufologists; a CISU prize for the best paper and the best investigation report received.

PUBLICATIONS

New technologies helped us a lot in getting a better presentation of our journal, "UFO - Rivista di informazione ufologica" (the only UFO journal nationally distributed) through a Macintosh/Laser desk-top publishing system. CISU has kept a busy standard of publishing: two issues of "UFO", five issues of the newsletter "Notizie UFO", six issues of the UFO Newsclipping Service, one research monograph.

As of UFO books, only one was published in 1987: Gary Kinder's "Light Years" about the Swiss contactee Bill Meier.

SIGHTINGS

And the UFOs themselves? Of course they keep on coming to Italy, especially for summer holidaying: more than one hundred reports were collected in 1987, most of them concentrating in an August flap. We cannot detail them all, so here are the best only.

* On August 6th, at 23.00, three young men in a car between Barcis and Cimolais (province of Pordenone) were enveloped by a beam of red light from above, and the car motor came to a stop. They got off and saw a lens-shaped object, 8 meters in diameter, hovering above them and emitting the beam. Frightened, they got back on board: it was as clear as if in the daylight, then suddenly the light disappeared and the car worked again... but they were at San Daniele, 40 kms. away (90 kms. by road), just ten minutes after the sighting began. At the hospital the three of them were found suffering from conjunctivitis and nausea.

* On August 18th, two peasants in Chions (prov. Pordenone) watched a silvery disc descending to the ground at 6 a.m. A blue light beam from it hit two chickens which "disappeared" while the disc took off.

* On September 15, at 8.15 p.m., three commercial flights above Vicenza watched a bright object crossing their route. The Ministry of Defense even had to emit a press-release denying there had been a near-collision risk.

I have to add that a new kind of IFO has been plaguing Italy in

1986 and 1987: the so-called "laser beams" used for advertising purposes or during rock concerts, often causing groups of fast-moving circular lights upon the cloud ceiling.

THE LUNATIC FRINGE

As a last feature of the year, it should be noted a greater activity of contactees/cultists groups in our country, after many years of virtual disappearance. The Milan group called "Le Pleiadi - Arcadia" succeeded in obtaining a lot of public exposure in national TV broadcasts on Channel 5 and seems to have become a reference point both for the lunatics nationally and for sensation-seeking journalists, who find them far more amusing than us, to the detriment of serious ufology.

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ABSTRACTS OF "UFO - RIVISTA DI INFORMAZIONE UFOLOGICA" ISSUE No. 5

As already said, the June 1988 issue of our journal was entirely devoted to the UFO abduction controversy. Thus a great many articles were just translations from American journals for the benefit of the Italian readers.

A long article by E. Russo is only briefly summarized here since it contained little new information for you foreign colleagues. On the contrary, a detailed abstract is presented of two articles (by P. Fiorino and G. P. Grassino) about Italian abductions, which you may find of interest. Two other Italian contributions were comments by Italian students on the books "Communion" and "Intruders".

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ABDUCTIONS IN ITALY

Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind by Paolo Fiorino

There are 34 known Italian abduction reports out of 382 CE-III cases in CISU files, but among these 10 are involving the same witness (Fortunato Zanfretta), 8 are admitted hoaxes and 5 are better referred to as "on-board" experiences by contactees.

Public knowledge of abductions began in December 1978, following the Zanfretta's first encounter, though the Italian press had reported the Hills', Pascagoula and Walton's cases. A large amount of information was published in 1986 about the Calolzo di Cadore (BL) abduction/hypnosis affair [see: ITUFOR-5].

A clear difference exists between more recent abduction reports and earlier CE-IV reports in the '60s and '70s, which were of the contactee kind (Galli, Zuccalà, etc.).

1954: THE FIRST CASE

On December 13, 1954 Naples newspapers reported of a 57 years old peasant in Gricignano di Aversa (NA) who had been missing for two days from December 8th: when he came back he told he had been "kidnapped" by two individuals, dressed "like the rainbow", who made him "walk for 48 hours without stopping". Sometime they were tall, sometime they were dwarf-like. He had felt like "flying" and weightless.

A full investigation by Umberto Telarico in 1974 took to little more than the press story, since the witness had died. His son added

that his father was completely dry when he came back, even though it had rained for two days. After the experience, the man had lived in a wild, confused state and stuttering in terror for "them" to come back for him.

No UFO was reported but the event took place during a great wave of UFO reports nationally.

1933: A PRECEDENT?

An even more ancient case was found in "La Nazione" newspaper of March 2nd, 1933: a peasant in Favorino (province of Reggio Calabria) was seized from his home by a "man" who took him away for about 30 meters, then slapped him, and after that he found himself on the top of a tall tree, where the being was holding him by his hair. He crossed himself and the entity disappeared, leaving him unable to speak: he could only tell his story by gestures when the neighbours finally found him and helped him to get down.

1978-79: THE YEAR OF THE HUMANOIDS

Several CE-III's took place in Italy during the 1978-79 wave, and two of them were sheer abductions: the well-known Zanfretta case [detailed in a separate article, here after] and a less known event in Lusiana (province of Vicenza): on 18th January 1979, at 23.30, a 42 years old wood-cutter had his car stopped, its lights turning off and the car doors opening by themselves. An "orange ball" was sitting on the road in front of him, and two copper-colored humanoids, 1 meter tall, came down from a door. The man could not flee while the beings came closer. They were wearing a metallic-looking, scaled coverall, their hands were long and ending with pointed nails, their ears were like twisted wires, which were vibrating and humming. The beings invited him on board by gestures and he followed them inside a small room (two square meters) with electronic-looking gadgets and a screen. The beings began undressing him but he resisted, very frightened. Then the wall opened and an overall appeared, which he feared they wanted him to wear, so he sat down and implored them to let him go. At this point, one of the beings gave him a small box on which he had written something. A door opened and he got off. Suddenly the orange light disappeared and the night was dark again, except for his car lights, which he found on again.

SOME POSSIBLE ABDUCTIONS?

A few potential or hidden abduction cases have also been collected: a UFO-related missing time was reported but no on-board memory.

* 23 February 1978, 23.45 p.m., Sesto Fiorentino (Firenze)

Two fiancées in a car got interferences on their radio. The man got off and found himself enveloped in a "warm, violet light". He saw "four shapes" and lights all around. After completing his walk around the car he got back inwards, where he found his girl-friend crying for he had left her alone for 20 minutes.

* 21 September 1978, 20.00 p.m., Cosenza

A young man walking near a yard saw all the area illuminated as by daylight and could no longer see the surrounding blocks. Upon a hill he saw an ovoid object resting on the ground and a human shape with two antennae. Frightened, he ran away but fell while four humanoid beings came closer by jumps. He fainted and when he recovered he was surrounded by four 1.5 mts. tall entities, wearing buttoned jackets, a rucksack and helmets with antennae. Their hands were pincers. He fainted again and he

woke up at 20.30 p.m., but all had disappeared.

* 8 December 1978, 23.00 p.m., Milanere (Torino)

Two young men walking along a mountain slope sighted a blue-white light among the trees. One of them got closer and disappeared. A few minutes later the light took off into the sky. The other man went to call for help from friends and a group of people came to search for the missing one, finally finding him in a different direction. He was unconscious, cold, felt weak and could not bear any light. Both witnesses suffered from conjunctivitis for several days. The disappeared one has a strange scar on his leg and only remembered he was approaching a pear-shaped light when he saw 3 or 4 human shapes with pumpkin-like heads, silhouetted against the light. He could not move and then he only remembered odd lights and sounds and a feeling of being touched and raised. He refused to be hypnotized.

A SINGULAR CASE

Only one known abduction was obtained entirely under hypnosis. It involved a 16 years old UFO buff who found and photographed strange traces on the ground near Lago d'Idro (Brescia) on July 27, 1973. Four years later he was hypnotized and under hypnosis he told he had been approached and touched by a "human shape" who had made him lose his senses. When he woke up he was being sucked up into an air-borne "object" through an opening underneath and a "vertical tunnel".

He had found himself in a round room where four "persons" were standing. Then a woman came in and the entities began moving around and talking and touching him on his forefront and his sides. He was nearly paralyzed and could only move his eyes. He was then taken to another room and he was made sit on a chair, where he could see outside while the UFO landed where he was before.

He descended and looked at the craft taking off, then picked up his camera and photographed the traces. The psychologist who conducted the hypnosis thinks it was a fantastic dream responding to specific needs of the youngster [as a far more complete analysis showed: the case was quoted by the doctor in medical literature].

CONCLUSIONS

We can summarize the abduction situation in Italy as follows:

- 1) the abduction phenomenon in Italy is very rare;
- 2) no great attention has ever been paid by the media: only Zanfretta got a national coverage;
- 3) very few detailed investigations were conducted and no case was fully researched;
- 4) hypnotic regression has been very rare and in some cases (eg. Zanfretta) has apparently gone out of control;
- 5) typical abduction features from other countries are also reported in Italy (in particular: the sequence of events).

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THE ZANFRETТА CASE HISTORY An Unsolved Riddle by Gian Paolo Grassino

On December 6th, 1978, at 23.00 p.m., the first event took place of the most interesting and complex Italian UFO abduction sequence. The case is well known, and we'll only summarize the first two abductions and try a general evaluation.

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

While he was patrolling at Marzano di Torriglia (province Genova), 26 years old nightwatcher Fortunato "Piero" Zanfretta suddenly noticed four "torch-lights" moving in a courtyard. He called his company headquarters by radio but got no answer, so he got off the car holding his pistol and torchlight, entered the courtyard and moved cautiously along a house wall thinking of some burglars. Then he was pushed forwards and fell down.

When he got up, his head hit on something and he pointed his torch upwards, only to find a 3 meters tall monster with a ugly face. Terrorized by the apparition, he let the torchlight fall on the ground, and the entity disappeared.

He ran to the car and was blinded by a yellow triangle-shaped object taking off from behind the house. He called for help through the radio. When his colleagues arrived at 1 a.m. they found him lying in a nearby lane, in a confused state of mind.

The event was published in the local newspapers and at once became a simple man's story amplified, filtered and distorted by the media, and polluted by ufologists and journalists.

HYPNOSIS

In order to understand several missing details, on December 23rd Zanfretta was put under hypnosis by a M.D. and thus he told how he was taken into a very bright room by giant entities who put a very hot and painful helmet onto his head. The humanoids were green-skinned, had yellow triangular eyes, red veins on their head, pointed ears and rounded fingers.

That was only the first of a complex series of abductions and of hypnosis sessions (also Pentotal "truth-serum" was later used), which gave birth to two parallel stories: conscious memories by Zanfretta and his colleagues telling the "before" and "after" of each abduction; and the hypnotic recalls of the "during". Such a scheme was repeated in all the 8-9 following Zanfretta's abductions, mixing the man's reliability, fantastic dream-like experiences, physical evidence and secondary witnesses.

THE SECOND ABDUCTION

A few days after the first hypnosis, on December 28th, 1978, at 23.46, Fortunato Zanfretta called his headquarters while on duty, telling he had lost control of his car near the Scoffera gallery, a few miles from Torriglia: the vehicle was speeding by itself along the mountain road in the fog and he could do nothing to stop it. Four minutes later he called again telling the car had stopped and he was getting off to see a strange light outside.

Once again the rescue patrol cars arrived one hour later from Genova and found him outside the car, beside himself. He was dry and warm, even if it was raining and cold, and the car interior and roof were hot. His pistol had shot 6 bullets, and several giant footprints (50 cms. long) were clearly visible (they were later destroyed by local ufologists after making plaster-casts).

A new hypnosis was conducted and filmed by a local TV station: once again the nightwatchman told how he had been taken on board, undressed and examined by strange devices. The beings had asked him several questions and promised to come back for him.

New details were added on February 6th, 1979 during a Pentotal narco-analysis: the strange-looking beings allegedly were from a lost people in the galaxy, and wanted to colonize Earth. The UFO inside was

greater than the outside and beings of both sexes were attending. Zanfretta's role was meant both as a specimen to study and as a kind of mediator with -us earthlings. He was promised a proof: a device (a pyramid inside a sphere) which could project "their" image like an hologram

THE AFTERMATH

This already complex story continued, even more complex and confused, through the following two years, with several encounters, some of them published or reported by local ufologists, while others are known to us only as rumours, in spite of several hypnosis sessions, newspaper and TV interviews. Indeed Zanfretta was "adopted" by local UFO buff groups who got a virtual monopoly on him.

In time, his accounts got more and more fantastic, comprising telepathic contacts and dialogues with the entities while he was under hypnosis; a "ufologists'" file kept by the entities on board; a sort of subterranean base where there were some cylinders containing prehistoric animals under ice; and so on. The promised "proof" was finally given to him but he allegedly destroyed it.

In 1981 the experiences ceased suddenly, without the promised final kidnapping of Zanfretta to another planet.

A DIFFICULT EVALUATION

Although a whole book was written (by journalist Rino Di Stefano) on this case history, as well as dozens of articles and hundreds of pages of investigation reports, it's nearly impossible to reach a conclusion.

A first problem is the quality of available information: very poor or invalidated by sensation-looking people or careless investigators, so that we can't understand what are the facts and what were deformations. Also the alleged physical evidence and corroborative testimonies are difficult to evaluate, for a number of reasons.

The very special surrounding climate should be kept in mind: the simple man found himself in the front pages and on TV, ridiculed, heavily influenced by "ufologists" (who even took him to their skywatches), repressed by several hypnosis sessions, and damaged at work by the withdrawal of his license to carry arms. It wouldn't sound strange had he "recorded" all such stimuli and given them back "mediated" through his own memories and fantasies, when put under hypnosis. We don't mean to exclude a physical, objective cause for his experiences, but we are no longer able to distinguish it among the subjective images presented by Zanfretta.

That's why we believe that the first two encounters are the most significant ufologically, especially the very first one, because external influences could not yet affect them. Thus it's a pity that no deep and accurate investigation was conducted at the time.

The Zanfretta case history was a sort of book on which everyone involved in the affair (journalists, employers, ufologists, friends) not only "read" but also "wrote" his own plot, thus making it too much a multi-faceted story for us to understand it as a whole.

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THE ABDUCTION PHENOMENON IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE Twenty Years of Studies of UFO Kidnappings by Edoardo Russo

The article consists of a history of CE-IV studies, presenting a

complete overview of the problem for the Italian reader, but mainly familiar arguments for most of our foreign colleagues: from the rebuttal of contactees in the early years to the more "acceptable" CE-III's and the first abduction reports; the "age of abductions" since 1975; the Alvin Lawson's imaginary abductees experiment and later his birth trauma hypothesis; Budd Hopkins and the invisible epidemics; psychological testing of the abductees; the European skepticism exemplified by John Rimmer's and Bertrand Méheust's books. In the end, the author also asks himself if abductees won't become the contactees of the future and wonders about the role of ufologists in the affair.

"COMMUNION" SPECIAL FEATURE

MY EXPERIENCES WITH THE VISITORS

by Whitley Strieber

Translation of an article published in the 'MUFON UFO Journal' issue No. 224, December 1986

It was followed by an editorial synthesis of the "Communion" story, plus a review of reactions by the American media, public and ufologists; Strieber's own attitude towards ufology; perspectives for the future.

WHAT IS HYPNOSIS?

An editorial box was also included explaining what hypnotic regression is and what you can or cannot do with it. Usual stuff for you informed international readers.

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YESTERDAY'S AND TODAY'S STRIEBER

An Interview with Danilo Arona

by Paolo Toselli

Danilo Arona, M.A. philosophy, is a Science-fiction writer and reviewer, specializing in horror and SF cinema. He's long been a fan of Whitley Strieber's books and we asked him to comment upon "Communion".

He finds a constant theme in all Strieber's novels: a superior intelligence unsuccessfully trying to communicate with man. "Communion" is following again on this same line. Presenting it like a "true story" would be but a typically American literary expedient: anyway a novelist could not write a "true story" even when he writes of true stories, because of his interior need to "fictionize" reality. Strieber may well have experienced his close encounters, but he built a powerful, pure fiction novel out of it.

Indeed, had he been struck by the "visitors'" light like St. Paul on the road to Damascus, i.e. had he not used the usual motifs and doubts of his previous books, we could believe him more than so. For example, the "initiation through suffering" is a recurrent feature also before "Communion".

As for the reason of his mass success in the USA, it may come from the "mysticism well" of America, the only western country where a fool preacher may become a candidate for President. Strieber craftly dig from

it and cunningly presented his book as a true story. In a sense it's not different from Orson Well's invasion from Mars or even (more subtly) Steven Spielberg's "Close Encounters".

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UFO ABDUCTIONS
A Comparative Study of Case Histories
by Thomas E. Bullard

Translation of an article published in the "International UFO Reporter" Vol. 12 No. 4, July-August 1987.

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"INTRUDERS" SPECIAL FEATURE

Another editorial article detailing latest developments, from "Missing Time" onwards: the Davies family experiences; public reactions; abductions and American ufology today; the critical side; CSICOP on the attack, and so on.

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INTRUDERS: UFO ABDUCTIONS
by Budd Hopkins

Translation of an article published in the "MUFON UFO Journal" issue No. 227, March 1987.

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ABDUCTIONS AND FOLKLORE
An Anthropological View of the UFO Kidnappings
by Bertrand Méheust

Translation of a chapter in the book "UFOs: 1947-1987", edited by Hilary Evans and John Spencer for the BUFORA (Fortean Times, London 1987).

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INTRUSION OR COMMUNION?
by Franco Ossola

The author is a well known UFO books writer and translator. As he completed translating "Intruders", we asked him to confront Budd Hopkins' and Whitley Strieber's books.

When he began reading the two books, he was expecting them to follow similar lines, though on different perspectives. When he came to their end he found himself in two different realities.

While Hopkins is presenting an investigator's factual report on a complex series of events, Strieber sounds much more literary and less convincing as of the physical reality of his experiences.

"Intruders" entities look like independent realities, real aliens; while "Communion" hauntings look more like "inner" entities. The whole book is so full of Strieber's own sensations, introspection, personal memories, psychological overtones, that it sounds more like an

"awakening of consciousness" path than a physical encounters' story.

Both books describe the eyes of alleged aliens the same way: large, dark openings where one may lose himself like in an endless well. But when it's Kathie Davis, you feel the unfinished outer space. When it's Whitley Strieber, you feel instead the equally unmeasurable inner space of conscience.

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WHO'S WHO IN ITALIAN UFOLOGY

We go on with our usual presentations of Italian ufologists.

Paolo Fiorino lives in Turin, where he attended university courses in theology and is presently working as a male-nurse.

He became interested in UFOs in 1971, and joined Centro Ufologico Nazionale (CUN) as Director of the Turin branch in 1975.

He's been one of the main members of the "Turin school" grouping around the journal "Clypeus-Ufologia", often writing articles on sociological issues.

Since 1979 he began focusing his interest on CE-III reports, and he is regarded as a national expert on the subject, having built a large file, compiled catalogues, and personally investigated several cases.

In 1985 he left CUN and was a founding member of Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici, where he is Director of the Humanoid Study Group ("Progetto Italia 3").

Position Statement:

"My present position vis-a-vis the UFO phenomenon can only be described as "agnostic". I no longer have any precise belief in what UFOs may be, while once I was sure they were extraterrestrial.

My personal interest lies in CE-III cases, because these usually contains more details and are the "critical point" of UFO experiences.

I think that we deal not with a single UFO phenomenon but with several independent phenomena, and that some of these have significative connections with other areas of study, e.g. religious apparitions. Moreover I think that a greater attention should be given to the witness and the environment (physical as well as sociopsychological) of a UFO experience."

All ITUFOR abstracts, translations and mistakes are by Edoardo Russo.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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